

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT	1. Soviet Tanker ALEKSANDR SUVOROV 2. Miscellaneous Information about the Soviet Merchant Fleet	DATE DISTR.	4 October 1954
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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

- From 15 April to 22 May 1954, the Soviet tanker ALEKSANDR SUVOROV underwent repair at the Howaldt Shipyard in Kiel. Repair costs amounted to 398,000 West German marks. The SUVOROV left for Ventspils for provisioning and refueling and was scheduled to proceed to an undetermined Polish port to take on coal for Arkhangelsk. The shipmaster, Captain Lopatin (fnu), expected to leave the Polish harbor on 28 May and to arrive in Arkhangelsk on 6 June. The ship was scheduled to stay in Arkhangelsk for two days and then continue to Murmansk.
- [redacted] the Soviet government made every effort to arouse the interest of young people in the sea. Intensive propaganda for the seafaring professions was made by the Komsomol, but with little success. Women first volunteered for seafaring jobs in the mid-thirties. Captain Lopatin estimated that three women served as shipmasters and five as mates in the merchant service. [redacted] the best sailors were the Great Russians, followed by the Ukrainians, and then peoples of the Far East. The last-named, however, showed little interest in the merchant service, in spite of the fact that they were good sailors. They specialized in fishing and actually manned the entire Far East fishing fleet. The best sailors hailed from the Murmansk coast, Arkhangelsk, and the surrounding area. Sailors from the Black Sea coast, from Odessa, and Sevastopol were inefficient. Lopatin said that he preferred sailors from the interior of the country to those who were born and had grown up on the Black Sea coast.
- According to the officers of the SUVOROV, almost all ministries were reshuffled and reorganized after Stalin's death including Ministry of the Maritime and River Fleet and the Ministry of Transportation. As early as the summer of 1953, Morflot managers were dismissed and replaced. Fomin (fnu), manager of the Murmansk Morflot, took over in late June 1953. The reorganization entailed no major alterations in the shipping field. Only the [redacted] of the Sevmorput vessels, including ships based in Murmansk and Vladivostok, were altered in

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the summer of 1953. The red band with hammer and sickle was replaced by a light blue band with white border and yellow hammer and sickle. The [] of the other merchant ships remained unchanged. Fishing vessels had a white stripe with a yellow hammer and sickle.

4. [] 35 to 40 Liberty ships [] were allotted as follows: two to Murmansk Morflot, seven to Leningrad Morflot, one to Odessa Morflot, and the remainder to Vladivostok Morflot. Although they were lightly built, Soviet shipmasters liked them because they were good icebreakers and good long distance ships. Lopatin maintained that these ships had no particular difficulty in breaking ice sheets 25 to 30 centimeters thick. They were popular as long distance ships because they could carry fuel for 70 cruising days. Three ships of this type were in the graving dock of the Howaldt Works in Kiel. All three ships had sagged slightly and showed two to four compressed folds in the way of the midshipbottom plates. Soviet engineers had suggested that longitudinal cover plates, 30 millimeters thick and 350 millimeters wide, be riveted on the bottom plates from the forward edge of hatch No. 1 along the hatch coamings to the after edge of hatch No. 5 to reinforce the ships. Soviet engineers also had developed another strengthening method which consisted of riveting a plate 30 millimeters thick and 500 millimeters wide onto the outer skin near the waterline. He added that similar strengthening methods had already been carried out on several Soviet ships []
5. Lopatin said that during the summer months, ships of the Murmansk Morflot were used exclusively to carry supplies to the Arctic ports; Murmansk, and Igarka, and others. The principal cargo was coal from Spitsbergen. Mine props and lumber were sent from the USSR to Spitsbergen.
6. [] bonuses and the duration of leave of a shipmaster depended on his home port. A shipmaster hailing from Murmansk, for example, was granted a monthly bonus of 2,400 rubles in addition to his regular salary and 63 days of leave per year. A shipmaster from Vladivostok received a monthly bonus of 2,500 rubles and 64 days of leave a year, while a shipmaster from Sakhalin received a monthly bonus of 2,700 rubles and 70 days of leave a year. These differentiated bonuses were granted to attract sailors to serve in climatically unfavorable zones.
7. [] every Soviet ship had a politruk who, until shortly before the war, permanently accompanied the shipmaster abroad. The shipmasters protested against this system on the grounds that a shipmaster was the representative of his country abroad and his authority was undermined by supervisory measures. They claimed, moreover, that nobody abroad understood such a system. The protest resulted in a Central Committee order that a shipmaster could go ashore alone at any time in a foreign port, and that he was not obliged to keep the politruk informed of his business and doings ashore. Despite this decree, several politruks maintained their former key positions.

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